



# The Null Subject Parameter in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

Professor Ian Roberts (University of Cambridge)

I begin by giving a very brief historical sketch of work on null subjects, and summarising the typology of null subjects, distinguishing consistent, partial and radical null-subject/null-argument systems, following Roberts & Holmberg (2010). I then present the recent important proposals in Barbosa (2014) concerning the relation between partial and radical null subjects. Following and developing a suggestion of hers (Barbosa 2014:49), this is extended to consistent null-subject languages and, further, to non-null-subject languages. This leads to a typology of null arguments which links their properties directly to the D-system in general, suggesting a cross-linguistic link between the nature of the null-subject system and the general nature of the “article system” in a given language. Next, I look briefly at the proposals for the semantics of null pronouns and pronouns in general, summarising and building on ideas of Barbosa (2014) and Elbourne (2005). This leads to a consideration of the role of the Person feature in licensing null arguments, following proposals in Longobardi (2008) and Richards (2014). Finally, a general account of “licensing *pro*” is put forward, which relies on the twin ideas that *pro* contains a variable and that all variables must be bound at the C-I interface (cf. the Bijection Principle of Koopman & Sportiche 1982/1990).

Date: October 13, 2016 (Thursday)

Time: 4:30pm - 6:00pm

Venue: 2/F, Activities Room, Art Museum East Wing,  
Institute of Chinese Studies, The Chinese University of Hong Kong

## ABOUT THE SPEAKER

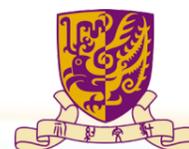


Professor Ian Roberts was born in Stamford, England, in 1957, and obtained a BA in Linguistics with a French minor from the University College of North Wales (now University of Wales, Bangor) in 1979. From 1981 to 1985 he attended graduate school at the University of Southern California, obtaining a PhD in Linguistics in 1985. His thesis was *The Representation of Implicit and Dethematized Subjects* and his advisor was Professor Osvaldo Jaeggli (Joseph Aoun, Murvet Enç, David Pesetsky, Bernard Comrie and Brian Loar all served on his PhD Committee at various times). In 1985-6 he was employed as Assistant in English Linguistics at the University of Geneva, Switzerland, under Professor Liliane Haegeman. From 1986-91 he was *maître-assistant* in General Linguistics, also at Geneva, under Professor Luigi Rizzi. In 1991 he returned to the University of Wales, Bangor, as Professor and Head of Linguistics. In 1996 he took up a Professorship in English Linguistics at the University of Stuttgart, Germany. Finally, he took up his current post as Professor of Linguistics at the University of Cambridge, England, in 2000.

Sponsor: United College, The Chinese University of Hong Kong



All are welcome



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